



Incredible forest

Innovation networks of cork, resins and edibles in the Mediterranean basin

“INCREDIBLE, Horizon 2020 thematic network, aims to show how non-wood forest products (NWFPs) can play an important role to support sustainable forest management and rural development” - Inazio Martinez de Arano, project coordinator.

Mediterranean forests play a pivotal role for local economies by providing a large array of ecosystem services and goods. Despite this potential, the sector is facing significant challenges such as low profitability of slow-growing timber and niche markets for NWFPs. It is also affected by an aging rural population, farmland abandonment and scrub encroachment which leads to an increase in the occurrence of forest fires, further aggravated by climate change.



The INCREDIBLE partners believe that a sustainable, inclusive, smart bio-based economy centred on multipurpose trees and NWFPs can be part of the solution, if triggered by an improvement in knowledge exchange between forest owners/managers and scientists and between regions.

INCREDIBLE was launched at the end of 2017 to address the existing research and innovation knowledge divide in relation to NWFP-service systems of the Mediterranean basin. In particular, as a thematic network, INCREDIBLE aims to link knowledge and foster collaboration among different groups of stakeholders, developing innovative business models and enhancing the expertise of rural regions for the development of inclusive economic strategies.

INCREDIBLE has set up Innovation Networks (iNets) around five different groups of Mediterranean NWFPs: **cork; resins; wild mushrooms & truffles; wild nuts & berries; aromatic & medicinal plants**. The results of these iNets will be shared on the INCREDIBLE Knowledge Sharing Platform, which will also host scientific and technical data on NWFPs.



Innovation Networks (iNets)

The iNets consist of researchers and practitioners from all around the Mediterranean who have complementary knowledge, expertise and experiences. They are coordinated by a project member. Each iNet gathers and shares knowledge and best practices related to production, transformation and trade channels, from both practical and science-based perspectives. Stakeholders within the networks share knowledge and collectively develop innovative business models and inclusive economic strategies for rural regions. They also

identify the most relevant needs in each sector in order to improve profitability, sustainability and their impact on the creation of green jobs and rural development.

Knowledge from science and practice is summarised and translated into easily digestible formats and shared via multi-actor events and workshops. A Community of Practice links the five iNets to ensure cross-fertilisation and develop capacity between sectors.

The iNets already began their work in 2018, holding “Scoping Seminars” which brought together forest owners, collectors, entrepreneurs, researchers, policy makers, industry representatives and public managers. During the first meetings, the iNets drew the complete value chain map of each NWFP, wrote a narrative of their sector and identified a certain number of priority themes that needed to be addressed in the next phase of activities and events of the project. These included:

“Wild mushrooms are the most widespread non-wood forest product in the Mediterranean basin and truffles provide the highest yield among them, significantly contributing to rural economies. The Wild Mushrooms & Truffles iNet brings together Mediterranean stakeholders across the mushroom-truffle value chain to boost the added value of such products, which is currently underestimated.”

José Antonio Bonet. CTFC, Spain, iNet coordinator

- **Cork:** maintaining the production of cork while facing the effects of climate change, pests and diseases, increasing cork production profitability, making the value chain more transparent, assessing the ecosystem services provided by cork oak forests.
- **Resins:** modelling long-term resource availability in a context of climate change, evaluating the compatibility of resin harvesting with other forest uses and with forest health, improving profitability of tapping and working conditions for resin tapper, developing of new resin-based derivative products.
- **Wild mushrooms & truffles:** setting the level of harvesting by professional pickers, improving supply security, traceability and quality standards, broadening commercialisation and market, creating value and territorial linkages.
- **Wild nuts & berries:** improving resource management through plantations and control of pests and diseases, applying high quality product processing, innovating in marketing, increasing consumer awareness, labelling of certification schemes for organic food production.
- **Aromatic & medicinal plants:** harvesting of wild plants while conserving biodiversity, accessing the resource and setting a legislative framework, supporting production and marketing capacities, developing traceability schemes.



Each iNet now has a section on the [project website](#) where you can find their priority themes, value chain map, narrative, roadmap, photos, news and you can even join up.

Results

INCREDIBLE will improve access to knowledge across the Mediterranean and support people in the NWFPs sector to identify business opportunities and develop innovative products and services.

The project also aims to provide policy-makers with clear, easy-to-use options for improving regulations on NWFP collection and commercialisation, as well as compelling evidence for NWFPs to have an acknowledged role in new Mediterranean bioeconomy policies.

Finally, INCREDIBLE also hopes to increase societal awareness about NWFPs, involving communities in the iNet activities.

INCREDIBLE is coordinated by the European Forest Institute with a project Consortium of 13 partners from 8 countries: Belgium, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia. The project receives funding from the European Commission's H2020 programme through the RUR-10-2016-2017 call, Thematic Networks compiling knowledge ready for practice".

INCREDIBLE project consortium

European Forest Institute (**EFI**) (Coordinator)
Forest Research Centre in the National Institute for Agricultural and Food research and Technology (**INIA**, Spain)
Union of the Mediterranean Forest (**UNAC**, Portugal)
ETIFOR, srl, (**ETIFOR**, Italy)
Croatian Forest Research Institute (**CFRI**, Croatia)
Forest Science Technology Centre of Catalonia (**CTFC**, Spain)
University of Ioannina (**UOI**, Greece)
National Research Institute of Rural Engineering, Water and Forests (**INRGREF**, Tunisia)
Service Center and Forestry Promotion and its industry of Castile and Leon (**CESEFOR**, Spain)
Instituto Superior de Agronomia (**ISA**, Portugal)
Centre national de la propriété forestière (**CNPF**, France)
Esset Energy Systems (**ESSET**, Belgium)
Agenzia forestale regionale per lo sviluppo del territorio e l'ambiente della Sardegna (**FoReSTAS**, Italy)

More information

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Join an iNet: <https://incredibleforest.net/content/what-inet>

<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/213789/factsheet/it>

Photos: Incredible project:

- *Field trip: Jacopo Giacomoni, Etifor*
- *Truffle hunting: Sarah Adams, EFI*
- *Cork oak: Joana Paulo, ISA*